



Horses, Not Houses at Fairgrounds

Posted by [Pierluigi Oliverio](#) on Monday, June 15, 2009

Now that Cattelus Development has walked away from developing the Santa Clara Fairgrounds, I hope the County will consider something other than housing. Perhaps a fee based sports complex or even...a horse track.

The goal of the Fairground's property is to bring in revenue for the long term. Selling the land at a depressed price is not optimal. A long-term lease would be preferred because it could bring in a source of revenue which is every local government's dream.

Currently, the Fairgrounds is home to off-track betting for horseraces, an operation called San Jose Fair Downs. Although the actual horse track does not exist, gambling does take place at the Fairgrounds. People can go to the Fairgrounds and bet on horseraces from the Belmont Stakes to the Kentucky Derby. So, since gambling already exists at the Fairgrounds, why then not consider using part of the many acres of the Fairgrounds parcel for a horse racing track?

The horse track in San Mateo, Bay Meadows, is now closed and was sold for housing at height of the real estate market. The only other horse track around here is Golden Gate Fields in Berkeley. This lack of horse racing facilities would allow Santa Clara County to have large market share for half of the Bay Area. Further, the land would then be mostly open space instead of thousands of housing units.

The County would make money on the gambling fees, parking, food and beverages. Some quantity of jobs would be created to maintain and service the facility. A racetrack would lock up the land for 10-20-30 years and then if the next generation wanted to change the use of the land they could do so at that time. Perhaps there is a revenue potential for other equestrian uses since some San Jose residents drive and pay to ride horses in other cities.

The horse track could be built in such a way that the infield acts as a park or sports fields by allowing the center of the track to have a dual use. I remember attending the Kentucky Derby and thought the infield

was enormous. So, here is an idea for the County to make money and the city in turn does not have to deal with thousands of more housing units.

I just hope that the County does not intend on adding another public golf course at the Fairgrounds. And, if they do decide to ponder the idea, perhaps the recent Santa Clara Civil Grand Jury report calling San Jose's public Golf Courses a financial sand trap will change their minds.

To view the 11 page report, go to this link:

<http://www.sccsuperiorcourt.org/jury/GJ.html>

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